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> Popular opinion demands steadfastness of purpose, insisting on a political morality which places single-mindedness and adherence to principle above all else... This unambiguity is not on offer from the heroes of retreat. Retreating from a position you have held involves not only surrendering the middle ground, but also giving up a part of yourself. Such a move cannot succeed without a separation of character and role. The expert dismantler shows his political mettle by taking this ambiguity on to himself.
>
> **Hans Magnus Enzensberger**

> It is time to disentangle myth and image from reality so that the latter can be seen whole. ... The history of Wales is far more complex than we have hitherto realised. ...before the dissection of the historiography of Wales, the historical understanding of the social process by which Wales has entered into her present ambiguous state is a vital necessity.
>
> **David Smith**

> ... it is the phrase "self-government" which is misleading. Who ever heard of a semi-autonomous region gaining full EC membership? ... We must stop sitting on the fence, the plain truth is that "self-government" belongs in the phraseology of a regionalist [and not in that of a nationalist] party. ... We have to decide what we are as a party - nationalists or regionalists? ... There can be no half-way house.
>
> **Letter to *Welsh Nation***

Introduction

Regionalist parties pose a twin challenge to research: they combine properties of political parties and the electoral circuit with those of regionalism and the territorial circuit. In a sense, regionalist parties, as defined here, are the hinge between the political system of a (host) state and the nature of political identity in a region. As a consequence, an understanding of their incidence and performance requires the study of the structural components of the political system - electoral laws, executive-legislative relations, party system, policy-style - as well as an investigation into the determinants of regional identity. It is on

these foundations - state as well as regional - that a regionalist party enters the electoral competition in its territory.

Based on these structural opportunities and constraints, a regionalist party will primarily concentrate on the mobilisation of popular support. But, depending on this structural environment, this need not only, or even predominantly, be the search for electoral 'success'. Often regionalist parties that have grown out of social movements continue to resort to methods of direct action rather than to straightforward parliamentary politics, seeing in such strategies a greater potential of linking up to their reference group. Equally, systems in which corporatist elements are more important than pluralist ones ought to lead the party to seek representation on functional and specialized bodies rather than in an assembly that might well be epiphenomenal to the politics of the region. In addition, the function of political parties, it has been argued, is not just found in the sphere of political decision-making, but also in the sphere of political agenda-setting. With the rise of academic attention to the construction of agendas for political contest and policy-making, regionalist parties, too, might be considered as more interested in designing certain agendas than on voting on the final outcome. Consequently, their primary effort would focus on the pre-parliamentary stage of politics. Finally, considering that most regionalist parties are active in regions in which ethnic minorities are confronted and intermingled with the ethnic majority of the host state, dynamics of consociationalism can not excluded. Thus, one could conceive of situations in which the regionalist party leadership would cooperate with state elites in order to have certain items removed from or put on the agenda (into the sphere of segmental autonomy) rather than entering into political competition over their resolution (Lijphart, 1971).

These brief introductory remarks - all of which are important for an understanding of the Welsh case - are meant to show that the parliamentary is only one of a number of arenas in which regionalist parties are bound to be

active, and that, therefore, the analysis of a regionalist party's performance needs to start from a broad range of variables, both structural and actional.

Another initial observation concerns the time-span under investigation. As a number of authors have pointed out, territorial politics require historical analysis (Rokkan and Urwin, 1982; Rhodes and Wright, 1987). Territory and nationality - regionalism - must be seen as a construction in terms of political space and cleavage (Bourdieu, 1991). This must certainly be true for those areas and communities in which regionalist parties are active, for they are both the outcome and the proponents of territorially-constructed identities. Working class, bourgeoisie or farmers have, one could argue, generated political parties on the basis of objective differences between the classes, even though here, too, there must have been an element of construction. But with respect to territory the constructivist side of politics is much more evident, since we can find many regions that are objectively different from national averages without engendering specific regionalist responses. Regionalist parties, as major actors in those regions which did, are therefore embedded in an environment in which the process of identity-construction must be considered an important element of territorial politics. The operation of such territorial politics, and with these the performance of regionalist parties, need to be viewed against the long-term historical process which has made the area in question a 'region' and, as such, an object of political conflict.

Turning from such general observations to the case of the regionalist party in Wales which is the main focus of this paper, the following analysis will comprise five parts: the first part will identify the elements of Plaid Cymru's structural environment, the second will look at the party's leadership and membership as well as the party's programmatic beliefs, policy-stances and strategies as they have emerged in the recent past, the third will discuss - against the background of this interplay of structure and action - Plaid's current activity and performance in Welsh politics. A fourth section takes stock of the

increasingly European dimension of regionalist politics and the way in which this has affected Plaid's position in Wales. By way of conclusion, the paper will put the findings of this case-study in a comparative West European perspective.

Elements of Structure in Welsh Territorial Politics

The British State

Wales is part of the United Kingdom, a state which has several distinctive features in the comparative West European perspective. For the territorial politics the most important of these are its unitary and centralist character, the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty as its constitutional foundation, the nature of its central-local relationships, the operation of a majority-type electoral system and the dominance, in the past, of a two-party system. Taken together, these features have posed a powerful centralizing force. Indeed, up to the mid-1960s the literature was dominated by views of disappearing differences and disparities among the component parts of the United Kingdom. But the British state is also a multinational state, having added the Scottish, Irish and Welsh parts - the 'Celtic fringe' - to the English core in a process that dates back to the Middle Ages. It has been argued that in respect to national identity, the English have never taken on board the Celtic parts on Britain, rather that the United Kingdom was widely perceived as an enlarged England, and that as a result the 'national minorities' of Scotland, Wales and Ireland were bound to become disenchanted with their 'subjugation' within the British state (Crick, 1991; Marquand, 1993).

This has created a basic tension in the British state: the centrifugal need to reflect, on the one hand, the plural identities of its different nations and, on the other hand, the centripetal dynamic of the unitary tendency contained in its constitutional order (Lottes, 1992). It is within this basic tension that the territorial politics of the Celtic fringe have developed in the past century - the century in which both nationalism and constitutionalism have become fundamental principles of European politics. The outcome of this tension for the celtic lands has been varied: for the Republic of Ireland it has spelt civic strife and eventual independence; for the North of Ireland a resurgence of political violence and a state of siege since the 1960s; for Scotland and Wales, the rise

of non-violent political nationalism and of territorial management since the late 1960s (Balsom, 1990).

With regard to the latter, one can see rather neatly the responses of both periphery - minority nationalism - and of the centre - territorial management - to the problematic of the multinational state (Kellas, 1991; Teghtsoonian, 1987; Bogdanor, 1979). There are important differences between Scotland and Wales, but they are similar in the sense that in both cases the dynamic between nationalist grievances and governmental response has produced exclusively peaceful means of change: negotiation with the centre, parliamentary over-representation, specific economic policies, attempts at devolution and a gradual institutionalisation of the region (Bogdanor, 1979; Teghtsoonian, 1987).

The near absence of violence in Wales does not indicate, however, that centrifugal-centripetal tension has been less significant. Indeed one could say that the erratic development of Plaid Cymru and of Welsh territorial politics at large indicate that here the search for an equilibrium is most difficult. Plaid's programmatic demands and central government responses are more ambiguous than those in both Scotland and Northern Ireland, political, economic and cultural issues are more fused and 'success' for the regionalist party more difficult to gauge.

If we look at regionalist parties in terms of their position on a scale of "degree of independence", the British case qualifies the way in which a regionalist movement can position itself on this spectrum. The doctrine underlying the unwritten British constitution is that of 'parliamentary sovereignty', insisting that any state power in the United Kingdom must derive from the parliament in Westminster. This might sound abstract, but it does have severe implications for all forms of power-sharing - judicial review of legislation, European integration, sub-state devolution (Ascherson, 1987). Essentially, the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty excludes all federal-type solutions to the problem of minority nationalism (Clark, 1992), even though

multilevel power-sharing and federalism have been seen as the only, and as relatively successful, solutions in the other two multi-national states of Western Europe: Belgium and Spain (Witte, 1992; Gallagher, 1991). In systems based on the doctrine of popular, as opposed to parliamentary, sovereignty it appears much easier to find constitutional solutions to the multi-ethnic problematique, to strike a balance on the basis of multiple levels of government that are independently legitimized.

The British constitution, however, demands a strict hierarchy in that all institutions of the state have ultimately be subjected to the Westminster parliament. For regionalist movements this constitutional situation imposes essentially a choice between a demand for outright independence - a separate nation-state - and adjustments to the current order combined with the ultimate acceptance of continued domination from the centre. This is usually an impossible choice, especially for a movement committed to non-violence: acceptance of ultimate subordination to the centre would declare any regionalist victory to be pyrrhic, whereas the demand for a new nation-state can be likened to the nuclear threat - a device that because of its severity could never be used.

It is in this respect that Welsh and Scottish nationalism appear to differ fundamentally: whereas the SNP has made a clear and blunt choice for demanding independence from the British state (Newman, 1992; Newell, 1993), the Welsh nationalists of Plaid have consistently demanded "self-government" (Elis Thomas, 1991). The distinction between Scottish "independence" and Welsh "self-government" might seem semantic, yet it is not. Indeed, this apparently minor distinction is an important part of the ambiguity with which Plaid tries to skirt its British dilemma - a point to which we will have to return later.

There is of course a third way out of this dilemma: focusing not so much on the future status of the region and instead concentrating on a reform of the constitution of the host state, thus enlarging the possible range of solutions to

include, for example, federalism. This appears to be the way the Lega Nord in Italy and some of the Spanish regionalist parties have evolved. And indeed, also in Britain there is a growing momentum for constitutional change, one important aspect of which would be the regionalization/federalization of the British state together with the end to the '*ancien regime*' of parliamentary sovereignty. There have been links between the various movements involved in this - Charter 88, Campaign for a Scottish Assembly, Campaign for a Welsh Assembly, Campaign for a Northern Assembly, Scottish Constitutional Convention, European Dialogue - but the regionalist parties have not been at the forefront of these demands (Roberts, 1993). Their focus continues to be on constitutional change in Edinburgh and Cardiff rather than on constitutional change in Whitehall and Westminster.

As for the time being London is decisive in governing Wales, it is important to note that parliamentary power does not benefit the parliament as a whole, but simply strengthens the governing party *vis-à-vis* the opposition. As a result, intra-parliamentary innovations such as the Welsh Grand Committee or the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs remain marginal to the formulation of public policy (Cody, 1992).

Equally, the party political situation has tended to increase central control over Welsh affairs. Except for a brief interlude in the late 1970s, central governments since the war have always been markedly unionist in their outlook. This tendency applies to both the Labour Party and the Conservatives. Since 1979 it is common, at least in Wales, to identify administrative centralization as a hallmark of Thatcherism and the project of the New Right. Yet it is important to remember that the build-up of the British welfare state after 1945 under Labour was also heavily - and consciously - centralist. The Labour Party, when in government, has had a strong tendency towards centralisation, which is unsurprising as it is a natural by-product of any attempt at comprehensive redistribution. This is important for the Labour Party has in this period been the

majority party in Wales, and the 'Welsh interest' would naturally have to be represented by the Welsh members of the Parliamentary Labour Party. As long as the 'Welsh interest' is defined narrowly, in economic and class-based terms, the dominant view in the post-war decades was that centralisation and nationalisation - and therefore the denial of an autonomous regional economic life - would be in this interest. It was Welsh Labour leaders, from Aneurin Bevan to Neil Kinnock, who repeatedly rejected Welsh nationalism and proved to be most hostile to plans for regionalisation and devolution (Davies, 1992; Jones, 1985). Only when in opposition - when confronted with central policies of an unwelcome type - has the Left reconsidered the virtue of centralism. In recent years the experience of long terms of Conservative government from London, together with new insights from institutional economics, has made the creation of regional governments more congenial to the Left without departing from the redistributive perspective. (Labour Party, 1992; Taylor, 1991; Coulson, 1990; Armstrong and Taylor, 1988; Cooke, 1993). As has often been pointed out, Labour has always depended heavily on the Celtic fringe for its parliamentary representation, and is increasingly unable to win majorities solely in England. Yet it would be wrong to portray as purely tactical a past policy - centralisation - which was also strongly ideological.

Post-war Britain has been a two-party system, a brief exception being the period in the late 1970s when the Labour minority government relied on Liberal and nationalist support. It was during this period that the most extensive debate about a fundamental territorial restructuring of the British state took place. The devolution bills for Scotland and Wales of 1978 were introduced by Labour, but only because in this exceptional moment Labour needed the votes of the small parties to govern Britain. The subsequent failure of this project has often been blamed on indifference if not sabotage by the government itself. To be sure, the Labour Party was clearly divided over the issue. In Wales, for example, there

was hardly any campaigning by Labour in the run-up to the referendum, while the Welsh trade unions campaigned against devolution (Davies, 1992).

The second-most important initiative to come from the centre has been the establishment of the Welsh Office, a measure that was demanded by Labour while in opposition and half-heartedly put into place after Wilson's 1964 election victory. The fact that the Office did come off the ground at all, and that it and its supplementary agencies were given a chance to grow significantly subsequently, must be attributed to its first Secretary of State, James Griffith, the most influential of the minority of leading Welsh Labour MPs who actively supported the idea of a regional tier of government.

From a regionalist point of view the demand for "self-government", as championed by Plaid Cymru, is quite naturally juxtaposed to government from the centre. In this respect it is often ignored that such a demand is not only in conflict with those who are set on governing from the centre, such as the British Labour Party, but also with those that are hostile to 'government' as such, as the Conservative Party has been since 1979. From their point of view, regional government implies more state intervention, more bureaucracy, but also more politics as opposed to economics. In this sense the 1980s, which have seen four successive Thatcher governments claiming to espouse decentralization by "rolling back the state", have proven to be a hostile environment in which to campaign for regional self-government. The abolition of the metropolitan councils in 1986, increasing fiscal control of local government by the centre, the introduction of the poll tax in 1990 and most recently local government reform have widely been seen as instances of hostility to local autonomy and regional devolution (Sharpe, 1988). The fact that the Conservatives have hardly any parliamentary representation from Wales has not helped the Welsh 'voice' in Whitehall or Westminster. In fact, the opposite might have aided Wales, since the Conservative Secretaries serving in Cardiff, especially Peter Walker and David Hunt, have not been at the forefront of the Thatcherite programme and

are credited with having reduced its effects on Wales. Under Major this state of affairs has turned around, as the post in Cardiff has fallen to the 'Thatcherite' John Redwood, an appointment which "will be seen as a sharp departure from wet predessors" (*The Independent*, 28 May 1993). Meanwhile central policies have, to some extent, become less rigid.

What has emerged as the central feature of Welsh politics, as a result of both Labour and Conservative rule in Westminster, is what is sometimes referred to as 'quangoland' or 'quangocracy' - the growth of nominated agencies and institutions to deal with specific regulatory issues in Wales (Osmond, 1992; Osmond, 1985; Jones, 1985; *The Economist*, 10 Feb 1994; *The Independent*, 28 Mar 1993). In the creation of quangos one can find one of the few overlaps among Labour and Tory policies, except that for Labour these were agencies implementing central policies in a given sectoral or territorial area, whereas for the Right quangos have been the first tier of transforming government functions into market-based regulation, eventually leading to privatisation. Noting 'quangoland' as a strange yet important hybrid of old left and New Right thinking, we shall return to this new Welsh identity below.

These accounts of British politics do not relate directly to Plaid Cymru, yet in the view taken here the events at the centre of British politics are important for any understanding of Plaid's role. The fact that in Britain the political system is structurally so fixed on the Westminster/Whitehall centre, and that this centre has effectively been governed by two parties that, for different reasons, have been strongly centralist in their character, and that, as a result, a purely administrative para-state has been built in Wales, is one of the main determinants for the programme as well as for the performance of Plaid Cymru. And it is for this reason that Westminster has become the main target of Plaid ever since it has seriously entered the party political arena in the late 1950s. Yet before looking in more detail at the party's programme and support, a brief look at the closer environment - an analysis of Wales itself - is necessary.

The Structure of National Identity in Wales

When looking for the historical parameters of regional identity - something which every regionalist party must do - three elements that stood out in the Wales of the turn of the century can be identified: coal-mining, nonconformity and the Welsh language. Few would dispute that in modern times the Welsh identity has been dominated by these markers. Naturally Welsh national identity is supported by numerous other factors - Rugby, the Welsh Dragon and Dylan Thomas perhaps the more famous ones - but politically it is important to distinguish between the social facts which were reconstructed into 'Welshness' and those factors, important but rather symbolic - which were used for the mobilization of this identity. Three preliminary observations are important at this stage. Firstly, unlike in the case of Scotland, Welsh identity has not, until recently, revolved around political institutions - Welsh identity has never really been constructed as that of a 'political' nation, even by Plaid Cymru itself. Demands for institutions have in the past always been seen as mere stepping-stones in achieving the principal objectives with regard to economics, religion and language. Emphasis on 'purely' political demands - government, parliamant, democracy - is fairly recent and linked to the growth of public institutions in Wales. Thus one could say that a 'state' has come into being in Wales almost by default - a by-product of the welfare state that became increasingly territorially defined to the region. We will return to this new, 'institutional' identity of modern Wales below.

Secondly, each of these aspects of a national identity has had its individual champion: the Labour Party as the defender of Welsh coal-mining, the Liberal Party as the defender of the nonconformity, and Plaid Cymru as the defender of the Welsh language. As will be seen, it is important for the understanding of Plaid's evolution that the first of these, the fortunes of the coalfields in the South and North-East of Wales, had increasingly come to dominate the politics and the economics of the region in the course of the 20th century (Davies,

1992), while the first, nonconformity, took up practically all the fervour of 19th century activism (Howell, 1993; Jones, 1980; Smith, 1980). It is quite logical, from this point of view, that a 20th century nationalism movement in Wales should rally around the language as a point of identification.

Finally, only two of the above markers of Welsh identity, nonconformity and Welsh, could be described as territorial cleavages, and even these only to a limited extent. The third, coal-mining, while clearly contributing to Welsh national identity, has been a cross-cutting cleavage, dividing the region and embedding Welsh working-class within the trade union movement and, by implication, the British class structure (Adamson, 1991; Smith, 1980). The role of the religious issue has largely subsided after the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in 1914. But the other two cleavages continue to be important for contempory politics. In this respect it is important to note that both the linguistic and the economic claevage, while being defining elemements of Welshness, have proven to be internally divisive. In the heyday of coal-mining the concentration of the industry in the South and the North East lead to seperate conglomerations, geographically quite removed from each other. This was a development which in turn lead to different patterns of development, to distinct communication flows, linking parts of Wales with English regions rather than with each other. In due course, also public institutions followed this pattern. This was the case with utilities after 1945 and, politically more importantly, the trade unions which forms seperate caucuses in the North and the South of Wales, creating distinct identities which were to survive into the formation of the Wales TUC as well as the Labour Party in Wales after 1945. These divisions are still visible in the Welsh labour movement today. The north-south division of Wales, engendered by physical distance, but reinforced by communicative, infrastructural and institutional separation, has thus contributed to the difficulty in mobilising Welsh identity. With the decline of the Welsh language this cleavage started to divide Wales itself even more sharply, making

it, in the 20th century increasingly impossible to mobilise nationalist sentiment with any hope for majority support (Table 12). These has arguably been the central dilemmas of Welsh nationalism: that while Welsh identity is quite clearly defined and a nation has been constructed, divisions within Wales have always prevented a successful political mobilisation of this identity on the basis of one these markers. It is only with the gradual emergence of an institutional construction of Wales since the 1960s that a new, encompassing *rationale* has been created: the democratisation of a specifically Welsh public administration - a subject to which we will have to return below.

As with most other West European nations, it was in the 19th century that the Welsh ascertained their common identity. This was the period during which the language was discovered as a medium for prose, poetry and education, in which a national university was founded, in which the tradition of folkloristic singing festivals, the *eisteddfodau*, was resuscitated, and in which a group of nationalists, inspired by the mission of saving the Welsh language from anglicization, emigrated to Argentina in order to found a Welsh-speaking community in Patagonia. Yet this cultural revival was, unlike in other parts of Europe, singularly devoid of any directly politically demands. The Liberal Party which was then dominating Welsh politics strongly supported the nonconformist demands for the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Wales and, by implication, the demands over the protection of the Welsh language. Yet political demands such as those for self-government or home rule were rare. In the last years before the turn of the century a short-lived effort was made to create a political movement to advance such ideas - *Cymru Fydd* - but it was heavily dependent on the Liberal Party and deteriorated when internal party differences over home rule became too divisive.

One reason for this indifference appears to lie in the nature of the British state which in the 19th century had a minimal administrative presence, in great contrast to its counterparts on the continent. Thus, what might seem paradoxical

from the current perspective of state-centred politics, was logical in 19th century Wales: protecting the Welsh language involved not so much a confrontation with the British state - though in the late 19th century disputes over the growing number of English judges were frequent - as with the established English-speaking Church, which had significant influence not only at prayer, but also in the linguistically important fields of social welfare and in primary education.

In this sense the 19th century was doubly significant for Wales: it did see the emergence of a self-conscious nation in Wales, the passing, in the terminology of Miroslav Hroch (Hroch, 1993), from Phase B (elitist activism) to Phase C (nationalist mass-movement), *without* actually formulating a demand for autonomy or independence. With the hindsight of the late 20th century, the Welsh nationalist revival of the 19th century was thus both a success (the construction of a cultural nation) and a failure (the lack of mobilisation towards a political goal), leading to the current situation, remarkable in the context of nationalist politics in Europe, of a nation aspiring not statehood but merely regional "self-government". It is against this background of limited nationalist mobilisation that Plaid Cymru emerged as the central nationalist movement in modern Welsh politics.

The 20th century, in contrast to the earlier developments, created fundamentally new tensions and opportunities for nationalist mobilisation. The immense transformation imposed by the industrial revolution began, in the first decades of this century, to result in large-scale immigration of industrial labour, mainly from England. The Welsh economy, a monoculture based heavily on extractive and heavy industries, was fully exposed to the cyclical ups and downs. These cycles - economic crisis, strikes and poverty leading to outmigration; boom, war economy and post-war reconstruction leading to in-migration - had an immediate impact on the components of Welsh national identity. Due to the demographic and social transformations within a relatively

short time-span both Welsh language and religion declined rapidly and became marginal in the social life of most Welshmen and -women.

The dominance of a vast coal-mining industry in the valleys of South Wales restructured identities in line with the collectivities of daily life: the work-place and the social life of trade unionism. Considering the upheavals and industrial disputes of the first half of the century, especially the 1926 general strike which had a particularly severe impact, it is no surprise that the South Wales Miner's Federation, the 'Fed', became one of the most powerful institutions. A way of life emerged in which a strong class cleavage became also the dominant regional identity, because capital ownership was concentrated outside the region and because self-help and local community inspired identification with coal-mining beyond the economic confines of the working class inside the region.

As a result of this development, the Trade Union movement and the Labour Party came to be seen as expressions of a specific Welsh identity perhaps as much as nonconformist chapels and Liberal Party in the previous century. Plaid Cymru was founded in 1925, precisely at this time when the Liberal Party was in the descendant in Wales and as the Labour Party began to dominate Welsh politics. The years up to the First World War had seen the nonconformist issue subside with the eventual disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Wales, with which a major rallying point for Welsh nationalism was lost. It was against the background of the decline of the Liberal Party - 'the party of Wales' which fell from winning 28 out of 33 seats in 1906 to only 12 out of 36 in 1931 - and the rise of an English-speaking Labour movement that came to dominate Welsh politics after the general strike of 1926 that the "National Party of Wales" - *Plaid Cymru* - was founded.

This origin at the intersection of two eras in the modern history of Wales goes quite a long way to explain both the programmatic content and the performance of the new party: with the 'death' of the Liberal Party the champion of a separate Welsh identity had gone, and in the face of linguistic

decline and the rise of working-class politics, there was a vacuum that demanded a movement dedicated to culture and language and destined to obscurity. Yet this opportunity for the founding of a new party proved to be, at the same time, a tremendous obstacle to electoral success.

The dominance of the economic issue over Welsh political life - a dominance rather neatly enveloped between the two great miner's strikes of 1926 and of 1984-85 - meant that any movement committed to cultural questions or even to nationalism would face an uphill struggle. Not that there wasn't a perception of separateness among the Welsh on which such a movement could built, indeed, this section was meant to show that there has been an abundant array of symbols, rituals, and traditions which could be forged into a Welsh national identity. But the dominance of the class aspect and the resultant strength of Labour and the Trade Unions, together with their commitment to a unitary, redistributive framework, meant that Plaid had little prospect of succeeding whilst that ideology remained mainstream thought.

The decline in the number of Welsh speakers (Table 13) increasingly shortened the odds of winning the electoral stakes for anyone campaigning solely along for the rescue and protection of the Welsh language. The following section will show how slow Plaid has been to respond to this structural dilemma. What needs to be emphasised here before moving to aspects of political agency is the way also the economic issue has declined, leaving the 'one-party state' of Labour politics as a heritage rather than the continuing expression of a singular cleavage.

The long-term decline of coal-mining and steel-making in Wales is best demonstrated in the rapid fall in the number of pits: this number fell from 214 in 1947 to 28 in 1984. Four years after the violent industrial dispute that was then fought over the future of British coal, only 8 operating pits were left. In 1994 the last pit was closed. Whether this declined was politically motivated, the result of plans for the privatisation of the coal industry or in fact necessitated

by business considerations does not matter here. What has been important for nationalist mobilization is that the economic structure of Wales was, firstly, engendering also a cultural dimension and, secondly, that this cultural dimension outlived the reality of economic life. Trade Union membership and voting Labour came to be seen as natural expressions of a sense of communality in Wales - a tendency, even if under attack from economic restructuring and the rise of the service economy - continues until today.

Meanwhile, a third 'wave' of structuration has replaced the economic cleavage with a layer of public institutions to reflect a specific Welsh identity. Beginning with 1945, a plethora of public bodies has been created with the remit of governed sectoral aspects of Wales (Table 15). Initially, these were clear expressions of the rise of the welfare state: hospital boards, education boards, utilities, etc. In their establishment central governments of both the left and the right had to acknowledge the need for regional differentiation. In the 1970s and 1980s agencies for Wales-specific purposes were added: Welsh Development Agency, Development Board for Rural Wales, Welsh Language Planning Committee, etc. This regional layer of public administration, once accepted, could not but recognize the identity of Wales which had developed over the past 200 years, even though this recognition was a struggle within the Labour Party, particularly.

The establishment in 1964 of the Welsh Office, the government ministry responsible for the execution of some central functions in Wales, resulted in the emergence of a party political circuit in Wales (Betts, 1993). All the political parties differentiated internally in order to reflect the emergent Welsh polity, and so as to be able to respond to regional issues appropriately. Equally, interest and pressure groups such as the Trade Union Congress and the National Farmers' Union, realized the political potential of the Welsh administrative level and created their political organisation relating to it. Gradually, the public

institutions and these new political actors became noticeable participants of consultative policy-making in Wales (Madgwick and James, 1980).

Further developments increased the complexity of this process: Local government, aided by the fact that Labour ruled most councils in Wales, local government associations were created on both levels: the Association of Welsh Districts and the Assembly of Welsh Counties. Especially the latter saw itself as a democratic counterpart to the Welsh Office. This whole circuit of deconcentrated central administration, territorial quangos, political parties, interest groups and local government does form the basis of a regional polity. There are now, in most sectoral fields, extensive policy-making networks, a result of regional identity and a sense of communality as well as of functional necessity.

Without going into further detail here, it can be said that this 'institutional' Wales is now the expression of a regional identity, building on rather than replacing earlier constructions of culture and economics. A Welsh 'para-state' having a considerable impact on the social life in the region but only minimal democratic legitimacy has emerged. As a consequence, the issue of democratisation of this 'para-state' has become one of the dominant issues in regional politics.

This 'return of politics' to Wales after the long period of cultural and economic concerns is, of course, of particular significance for the understanding of a regionalist party. But these identities, networks and discourses are only the 'raw material' out of which political actor draw their support and generate their actions. Subsequently, it will be necessary to ask how Plaid, their leaders and their activists, have responded to the changing configuration of these structural opportunities and constraints over time.

Ethnic Mobilisation in 20th Century Wales

Origins and Early Years of Plaid Cymru

Plaid Cymru's history can most usefully be divided into three periods: its origin under the leadership of Saunders Lewis until his resignation in 1939, the period of gradual transformation under the leadership of Gwyfor Evans from 1945 to 1980, and the emergence of a modernist platform in the 1980s and 1990s. For the purposes of this paper, the more recent period is most significant, yet certain foundations were laid in the early periods which still bear on current problems and therefore deserve a brief introduction.

Saunders Lewis was the kind of charismatic but also idiosyncratic leader that is perhaps typical for nascent nationalist movements. As a poet and writer, he was first and foremost a cultural figure. He became president of a party that was to all means and purposes a single-issue pressure group, concerned solely with the defence and promotion of the Welsh language and culture in the face of accelerating anglicization of South Wales (Davies, 1985).

Lewis' philosophy was influenced by a strong Catholic conviction which set him on a collision course with the Anglican British state and with the secular Labour movement. Party ideology under Lewis was a harking back to medieval pre-reformation, pre-English, pre-industrial Wales with the clear normative message that those times were better times than the current - i.e. that the English influence on modern Wales, identified as being in turn the Anglican denomination, industrialisation, urbanisation, bureaucratization, secularisation was morally, as well as politically or economically, harmful.

From the start there were strong pacifist and environmentalist, as well as nationalist, elements in Plaid Cymru's programme, a disposition that came to a head in 1936 when Lewis and two other party leaders went to prison for setting fire to a RAF Bombing School under construction in Wales. Yet despite modest growth the party remained peripheral to British and even Welsh politics

until well into the 1960s. Until the 1950s this was largely voluntary, since there had been no clear choice on the pursuance of the party's cultural and linguistic aims through parliamentary channels. Lewis' arrest was perhaps the clearest sign that even the leadership of the party was prepared to resort to direct and illegal action and that concentrating on electoral success was regarded as secondary if not detrimental to the immediate purpose of saving the Welsh language.

This changed gradually after the war as the party, under the leadership of Gwynfor Evans, began to contest general elections more systematically, though it took until 1959 that even half the Welsh seats were contested (Table 5). The 1930s, 1940s and 1950s with their immense social transformations, economic upheavals and industrial disputes were inhospitable times for a party that still pursued the discourse of the previous century. Yet, it must also be said that the party was a model of inflexibility during this period. It is difficult to grasp, with hindsight, how the party could still campaign on a more or less exclusively Welsh language platform in the 1950s when it was clear that - whatever the future of the Welsh language - Welsh politics were made in English.

The most important policy changes of Plaid Cymru since 1945 fall into the 1960s which also saw its first parliamentary success. During the 1960s the party changed its basic outlook towards bilingualism and made the demand for a Welsh parliament its main goal - decisions that were internally controversial, but which would prove essential in the electoral contests of the following decades. Thus the 1960s marked the stage in which we can speak, for the first time, of Plaid Cymru as a mature political organisation, of a regionalist party rather than a cultural movement. (McAllister, 1981).

There are three dimensions to this transformation which began in the early 1960s and which is still ongoing: firstly, a departure from cultural and intellectually inspired elitism towards progressive and radical socialism; secondly, the enlargement of the party's goals to include not predominantly

linguistic issues but also a socio-economic programme and the demand for Welsh autonomy; and thirdly, the decision to engage primarily in electoral contest and therefore to renounce violence, illegal acts and even direct action as viable alternatives. To a large extent changes along these dimensions have been compatible with, if not dependent on, each other. Yet, the radicalism of the departure from decades of established principles has created internal tensions and divisions along a number of lines.

Most directly the issue of reform has created two broad camps which have been called 'modernist' and 'traditionalist', the former obviously favouring the opening of the party towards the English-speakers in South and North East Wales as well as an end to non-parliamentarian methods. Considering that the English-speaking majority in Wales has voted in the past for a socialist Labour party, the tactical choice of targeting this electorate would also imply a programmatic turn to the left. But in this respect there were also internal divisions, into 'National Left' and 'Hydro Group' respectively, among the modernists, while among the traditionalists left-wing views were not uncommon (Davies, 1985)

Internal and external developments in the 1960s laid the foundations for the dominant position of modernists in the party which continues until today. One important event was when in 1962 a number of Plaid members joined to set up the Welsh Language Society in order to defend more forcefully the original aims of the party which they saw as being watered down. This had been urged by Saunders Lewis in an influential radio lecture. He also wrote that the party "should not tire of the wilderness" - for him direct action on cultural and language issues continued to be preferable to 'meaningless' electoral success. The foundation of the Language Society allowed Plaid to concentrate on electoral politics and programmatic expansion - there was in a sense a division of labour in which the Society took over Plaid's previous role as a linguistic direct-action movement while the party, under the direction of Evans,

modernised and adapted to the demands of the British electoral system (Adamson, 1991; Davies 1992).

The success of winning its first parliamentary seat in the 1966 Carmarthen by-election gave powerful support to the potential of the modernist strategy. The victory of Gwynfor Evans in 1966 and the channeling of traditionalist energies outside the party meant that in the 1970s Plaid could concentrate on the Westminster stage. It was then, with the rise and decline of the devolution issue, that the foundations for the recent reformulation of Plaid's positions were laid. Plaid's mixed parliamentary experience since 1966 (Table 5), the devastating result of the 1979 devolution referendum (Table 10) - only 11 per cent of the Welsh electorate supported the proposal for a Welsh Assembly - and the implications of a rapidly growing network of Welsh public institutions (Table 14): these are the main determinants of nationalist politics which are confronting Plaid today.

Plaid Cymru after the Devolution Referendum

From a Welsh nationalist perspective the 1980s were a difficult period. In the aftermath of the devolution debacle, the polarization during and after the 1984 miner's strike and the scale of economic transformation following the decline of extractive and heavy industries posed major challenges to any attempt at mobilization on the regional issue. Four terms of Conservative government gave Britain the impression of becoming a 'one-party state' (Nairn, 1994), returning Labour to its traditional role as the Welsh opposition party.

In this situation the party chose to remain loyal to its new programme of 'socialist inclusion', demanding at the 1982 annual conference a "decentralized socialist state" for Wales. It was perhaps the (tactical) realisation that Welsh elections are won by winning the Labour vote - all but one of the 15 constituencies in which Plaid is doing best are Labour strongholds - which best explains this further shift to the left (Rallings and Thrasher, 1993).

Yet Labour itself has been changing, and also the old Liberal party returned to Welsh politics in some strength, first in the guise of the Alliance and later as the Liberal Democrats. By 1992 these two parties were again calling for elected assemblies for Wales (Labour Party of Wales, 1994; Labour Party, 1990, Liberal Democratic Party, 1991), and in the same year the Wales Trade Union Congress which had campaigned for a 'No' in 1979, passed a resolution at its annual convention calling for an elected assembly for Wales (WTUC, 1993). These demands, which went further than the 1979 devolution bills, made credible, more than ever before, Plaid's basic aim of self-government for Wales. This new and - considering its abrupt failure a decade before - surprising credibility of the demand for a Welsh Assembly appeared to work well for Plaid, who won their fourth seat and thereby overtook the SNP in parliamentary representation at the 1992 election.

Simultaneously Plaid's stand on its second main issue, the fight for equal rights of the Welsh language, had also received increased credibility. Largely through non-parliamentary actions the nationalists - Plaid as well as groups like the Welsh Language Society - had extracted major concessions from the authorities. Most significantly, a Welsh-language TV channel, S4C, was set up in 1982, a decision in which Gwynfor Evans threat to stage a hunger-strike, was decisive in mobilising the nationalist camp and force the government to fulfil its pre-election promise (Davies, 1985). Equally important was perhaps the steady growth of a specifically Welsh education system in which Welsh medium teaching was on offer on all levels, and where Welsh language classes became compulsory also on English medium schools (Williams, 1991). The Welsh Arts Council had, from 1967 onwards, supported arts in the Welsh language with increasing and significant financial contributions (Davies, 1992). The 1994 Academy Award nomination of a Welsh language film, *Hedd Wyn*, might serve as an example of the potential results of these combined efforts. The film, commissioned by S4C and produced by an independent Welsh film company, tells the true story of a Welsh poet that, according to *The Independent*, "every Welsh school pupil knows intimately, but whose name is virtually unknown to students of literature elsewhere ... His prize-winning poem *The Hero* has still to be translated [into English] in full." (*The Independent*, 13 Mar 1994). Thus, a trend may have begun in which Welsh as a language has not only been saved from the fate of, say, Gaelic or Occitaine, but in which it might even become the medium by which people from outside the region might learn more about it.

Due to these factors, aided by the widespread use of bilingual road and shop signs, administrative forms and official publications - even the Conservative Party manifesto for Wales is now bilingual - the late 1980s and early 1990s saw Welsh language use rising. A modern and urban Welsh language media and communication subculture was born, the result of which was both symbolic - allowing the language to leave behind its old-fashioned and rural image - and

substantial. Economic problems had forced new generations since the 1930s into emigration, a condition concomitant with the uselessness of Welsh language profiency for the individual. The economic boom of the mid-1980s made, above UK average and based mainly on inward investment, meant this situation was changing (Table 11) (Morris and Hill, 1991). Learning and speaking Welsh was beginning to be regarded by many as not, any more, an embarrassment or a waste of resources, but as a useful asset in an increasingly competitive service economy (Williams, 1991). Attendance at Welsh schools increased and between the 1971 and 1981 the percentage of three to fifteen year-olds in Cardiff with a knowledge of Welsh increased from 4 to 7.2, "an increase which if sustained would ensure that the majority of the children of the city were Welsh-speaking by 2021" (Davies, 1993).

Surely some of these predictions and expectations regarding both regional self-government and Welsh language development tend to be too enthusiastic and out of touch with the constraints that remain. Yet, what has to be noted here is the fact that in the two key areas of Plaid's programme the dominant discourse and public opinion has shifted markedly in its favour. As they continue to be relatively extreme with respect to the spectrum of present views on "independence from the centre", it would be wrong to speak of Plaid as being part of the mainstream of Welsh politics, but it certainly has moved into a position where its demands and arguments link up with current conditions in a much more compatible way than, say, in the early 1960s or early 1980s.

Plaid Cymru Today: Programmatic Profile, Organizational Structure and Electoral Performance

General Programmatic Profile

Having transformed its strategies and programme from 1962 onwards, the modernised Plaid Cymru presents itself as a progressive, forward-looking force in Welsh politics. Insistence on the Welsh language and opposition to English, the core of the party's original position, has been replaced by the demand for consistent bilingualism, which, as noted above, is not controversial in today's Wales. A host of supplementary demands are consistent with earlier positions: protection of the environment, industrial democracy, disarmament and decentralisation. Indeed, the ease with which these original beliefs have been transformed into the current aims of a New Left-type could give one the impression that in a number of aspects the old Plaid began as a modern party, and that it has been the times rather than Plaid which have been changing profoundly.

With respect to issues of a libertarian dimension, Plaid now is inclined towards left positions. With respect to pacificsm, this was never far from the party's mainstream ideology. The 1991-92 Gulf War in which British troops were directly involved, renewed the opportunity for Plaid to manifest this commitment. Their MPs duly did so when they voted with the Labour rebels against the Government and Opposition resolution to authorise the use of force. Plaid supports the demand for nuclear disarmament, joining in this the Welsh County Councils which have declared themselves "Nuclear-Free Zones" quite some time ago. In Westminster Plaid has also stood for increased attention to the problems of disabled persons - a Plaid MP has made this a special concern. Equally, green issues have been high on the agenda, especially since Cynog Davies - elected on a joint PC/Green Party platform - became, in 1992, the first 'green' MP, representing also Green Party interests in Westminster. Finally, the treatment of gender issues deserves special mentioning, for recently Plaid

announced that it wanted to reserve 50 per cent of the future parliament for female members - a rather radical emulation of the 'quota' debate within the new left of the continent, but less convincing in view of the fact that only 21 per cent of the party's National Executive and 29 per cent of the 'Policy Cabinet' are female. Finally, Plaid has of course always taken a stand on the issue of immigration, but this has changed rather dramatically as part of the party's transformation. When originally the party was opposed to unfettered immigration from England (and perhaps also from Ireland which ranks second among the origins of those not born in Wales), it has now shifted and regards any resident of Wales a citizen with full rights. This shift is opposed by groups outside the party, some of which use also violent means to prevent English speakers from acquiring real estate in the region. Plaid, by contrast, having realized that electoral success can only be achieved with the votes of English-speakers and probably aware of the fact that Welsh identity without the linguistic component is impossible to be defined objectively, have moved to a non-ethnic definition of Welsh identity: all those living in Wales, irrespective of language proficiency and of origin, are recognized as Welsh 'citizens' and would enjoy equal rights after the achievement of self-government. Consequently there appears little danger of 'Latvian-style' legislation on immigration and citizenship.

In terms of socio-economic demands, Plaid has, after some oscillation, arrived at what is perhaps best described as a social-democratic position. It supports a higher degree of state intervention, improved social security, better provisions for small farmers, more investment into health care and education. It is argued that Wales does pay more taxes than it receives in expenditure from London, and that as a consequence regional, fiscal autonomy would be beneficial. The issue of territorial redistribution has been used frequently by the Party in recent years, also because it is only with the increasing drawing of administrative and financial boundaries that such matters can become politicized.

But Plaid's use of the matter is not entirely consistent: on the one hand it has run a major campaign over water rates, protesting that water produced in Wales is much more expensive there than in the West Midlands to where it is also exported. At the same time, London governments are continuously reminded that they have to do more for Wales, that large-scale public or private investments must remain in the region because of the social cost such industries' closures would incur. It is not clear, therefore, if the British state is supposed to become more or less involved in the economic life of the region. Equally, a pattern of favouring state intervention to market-based solutions is discernible, yet at the same time party demands more power to the people, less tutelage, encouragement of self-help, etc. It is thus caught in the dilemma of conflicting libertarian and socialist goals which is not alien to parties of the New Politics-type.

Yet in the case of Plaid these can at least to some extent be reconciled in the underlying demand for decentralisation and strengthening of local government. The idea of strong local government is quite congenial to the accommodation of economic and civil objectives and has turned out to be a programmatic asset of some relevance. Firstly, strong local government is not perceived as much utopian a demand as regional devolution, since it is achievable gradually rather than instantly. This ought to increases the perception of a party having credible solutions to existing problems. Secondly, as shown below, inside Wales Plaid's support is locally concentrated - a unitary Welsh state would therefore be quite undesirable from a party political perspective. Strong local government might give future Plaid-controlled councils more power *vis-à-vis* a likely Labour-dominated parliament in Cardiff. Thirdly, the experience of what Plaid habitually calls "other small European nations" is indeed one of have strong local autonomy: the Scandinavian and alpine countries as well as the Netherlands are all of this type. Plaid can thus point to working solutions of the redistributive-libertarian dilemma which are, to make it an even better argument,

economically significantly more successful than Britain. The party literature does not tire to point out that a self-governed and internally decentralized Wales is not utopian but, on the evidence of 'comparable cases', demonstratively advantageous to the current situation.

There is a whole theory of regional political economy attached to the question of size (Schumacher, 1973). Leopold Kohr, whose best-known work advocated the restructuring of Europe with states the size of Wales, became a friend and mentor of Gwynfor Evans after the war when he moved to Wales. His "size-theory" promised that a system of small states was bound to be more peaceful and profitable than the quest for largeness of the 20th century (Kohr, 1957; *The Independent*, 14 March 1994). Whatever the academic value of Kohr's contribution, there is no doubt that his thinking influenced Evans and the party at large, and that this pan-European dimension of decentralization has become a useful part of the programme (Evans, 1991).

"Self-Government in Wales"

Currently article 2 of the Party Constitution (as well as membership cards) state the party's principal aims as the following:

- to secure self-government and a democratic Welsh state based on socialist principles
- to safeguard and promote the culture, language, traditions, environment and economic life of Wales through decentralist socialist policies
- To secure for Wales the right to become a member of the United Nations organization

The strong socialist element of these aims which date back to the mid-1980s is explained by the dominant position the party left gained over the more rightist factions around that time. The 1984-85 miner's strike had polarized political positions, and for the following few years the left-right dimension was most significant in the external debate. As the Left gained the upper hand, socialism had to become part of explicit ideology (Balsom, 1990).

Apart from this distinction, references to the achievement of a "state" and of UN membership appear to be straightforward nationalist demands of the late 20th century nationalism. Indeed, the only aspect of these main aims which distinguishes Plaid from the typical anti-colonial movement of the 1960s is the reference to "decentralist" policies, the significance of which has been discussed above.

And yet, the way in which these aims have been put into practice makes them less straightforward than they seem. Repeated modifications of the campaign manifesto have gradually altered the basic outlook of the party. For reasons which will be discussed in more detail under the heading of 'Europe', Plaid under the leadership of Dafydd Elis Thomas was transformed into an 'anti-nationalist' movement. This term, used by the party's vice-chair Phil Williams to sum up Elis Thomas' outlook, indicates the gulf of possible views one might

have of Plaid's stand. 'Anti-nationalist' is perhaps too obvious an attempt at distancing the party in the London press from previous, orthodox nationalist positions. Considering the need the party has felt since the mid 1970s to capitalize on a complex Welsh national identity which remains largely unmobilized rather than on express nationalism, it is logical that Plaid should try to present a moderate patriotism as opposed to old-style nationalism as its basic tenet. This belief in a degree of moderation is what the leadership of both Elis Thomas and Dafydd Wigley, his predecessor and successor, had in common.

The important point to be made about Plaid policy on self-government is nevertheless that it less about moderation than about ambiguity, and that this ambiguity is not just a tactical device for fighting electoral campaigns in a divided territory but also the acknowledgement that such an ambiguous profile must be part of (post-) modern nationalism. As this point is central to an understanding of the Plaid in the 20th century, it deserves some elaboration.

Old-fashioned nationalism relied on a simplistic conflation of two organizational units: nation and state. Where the boundaries of these two units have been incongruent, nationalism has provided the mobilising force to change the status quo. Nations have had to achieve 'their' state, and, *vice versa*, states had to create 'their' nations. This has usually been a conflictual, and often a violent process.

A nationalist movement is usually about the mobilisation of the communal group - the nation - to create an institutional boundary - the state. The resulting demand for national statehood, if it is successful, has as its natural outcome secession, separation, independence. Apart from arguments as to whether such independence is economically viable or not, the dominant, liberal post-war consensus on the secessionist demands of nationalism is that it constitutes too great a rupture of the existing structure as to be permissable.

That is one of the reasons why achieving independence has become more difficult in Western Europe since 1945. Internal restructuring and almost continual reform is visible in most states, and novel approaches such as asymmetrical, multi-speed and non-territorial arrangements have become possible. Outright secession of national minorities to achieve independent states, by contrast, has proved to be an elusive aim of minority groups and terrorist organizations, also and perhaps especially in the liberal democratic systems of Western Europe. As pointed out above, the British constitution is unusual in that it does not permit the type of power-sharing solutions which have found the support of nationalist movements elsewhere in Europe.

Plaid, or at least its leadership under the influence of Elis Thomas, has come to the conclusion that to bridge this gap in the range of potential solutions to the territorial aspirations and the confines of the British state requires a move beyond established nationalist positions. While the SNP continues to demand a Scottish nation-state, implicitly accepting the logic of parliamentary sovereignty, Plaid has become what is perhaps best called 'post-nationalist'. If, in the discourse of a nationalist movement, "state" and "independence" are central frames for the traditional claim to statehood, the absence of such terms from recent Plaid discourse is perhaps the best guide to the development which has been going on since the late 1980s.

Instead, Plaid has concentrated on using phrases such as "elected Welsh assembly", "self-government for Wales", "independent voice for Wales", "responsible self-government", "independent small nation", "full national status", "full political status" and "a Wales governed democratically by a Welsh parliament". Nowhere in the recent party literature, in interviews and statements from party officials is the term "state" or "independence" being used, a fact that appears to be a conscious choice considering how frequent such usage is by the SNP, and how abundant the opportunity would be for Plaid to do so.

"State" and "Independence" do not appear in the vocabulary of Plaid, yet the discourse that is being practiced by the party has its usefulness in the fact that it revolves around institutions that, especially in the context of British politics, most people associate with statehood. A call for a parliament and a government, without further qualification, implies for most voters a call for a state, but reducing the aspect simply to the most significant aspect of this claim. At the same time, Plaid can and does claim that it wants a place for Wales in the "Europe of the Regions", and that it has accepted the lesson that "clearly there can be no place in our vision for the 19th century nation state and the military, cultural and economic imperialism that has accompanied its dominance of modern European history (Plaid Cymru, 1993).

The fact that these two claims are not, *per se*, incompatible is that Plaid's terminology can apply to the institutions of a "region" as well as to that of a "state". Regions in France, Italy, Spain, Belgium and Germany all have institutions that are variously called government, assembly and parliament. German and Belgian regions have prime ministers, while France, Italy and Spain have regional presidents. In Germany and Belgium, within federalist systems, the regions are, whatever their national terms, 'states' in the North American sense.

One might thus start such a cursory evaluation of the content of Plaid's demand for self-government with the clarification of what could be a semantic confusion, but which is more likely a conscious attempt at catching both the voters of the progressive left and the voters of old-style nationalism. But, as indicated above, the curious framing of "self-government" in the party programme is not only due to tactics. It is part of an approach to European politics which accepts that there are few certainties and no determinable outcomes. It is the acceptance of complexity, of interdependence and of multidimensional politics which, according to some academic opinion, are

becoming the foundation of political life in Western society, replacing the one-dimensional sovereign state.

Plaid implicitly rejects the idea of sovereignty and of independence, because these established principles have ceased to relate meaningfully to current political practice in Western Europe, yet it frames the departure from these principles in a terminology which alludes emphatically to them. More than superficial electoral manoeuvring, Plaid's move towards "self-government" can be explained as the central part in an attempt to take the ambiguity of changing circumstances onto themselves and creating a timely programme from this condition.

Those in the party like Elis Thomas who have masterminded the move, can therefore be likened to the expert dismantler, as Enzensberger, quoted at the outset, would have him. Plaid, if not as a political party than as part of a political movement, is in the process of surrendering the "middle ground" of nationalism - the creation of an independent Welsh state - and has accepted the creation of a democratised Welsh region as a more appropriate aim. This is a retreat. But the ambiguity contained in the demands for self-government and parliament hides this state of affairs, crucially allowing the party to maintain an image of consistency between its old and new policy, as well as between the support for statehood and the acceptance of its impossibility.

This ambiguity is important in a number of respects: it bridges the classic nationalist dilemma between utopianism and pragmatism; it maintains a link to past programmes and prevents the accusation of volatility which is often levied against small nationalist parties; it provides the party to capture the intellectual high ground with the claim that its policies, far from being outdated, are in fact heralding the post-state future; and, for this reason, it works as another delimitator between Plaid and its main opponent - the Labour party - which, though calling for similar policies, does so on a different foundation.

In this sense Plaid's politics of ambiguity appear to be rational and workable. As we will see below, its success, as far as can be currently discerned, is questionable. It appears to do little to incite the urban, South Wales electorate to vote Plaid instead of Labour or Conservative. Those who are prepared to leave the imperative of the British state behind are more attracted to the Liberal Democrats federalism or to the New Politics of the Greens than to Plaid's ambiguity. In North West Wales, there are also fissures in the acceptance of the modernised ambiguous, for even though Plaid won their safe seats there in 1992, there was a threat in 1991 from the hard-line nationalists "Covenantors of the Free Welsh" to stand against Plaid at the European election. The recent rise in the Plaid vote in the North West has gone hand in hand with a rise in militant action, even violence. Plaid's politics of ambiguity might, for the moment, keep the more militant electorate in the fold, but as indicated by the letter to the party's newspaper which is quoted above, the time might be nearing in which ambiguity - "sitting on the fence" - will be less of an asset and more of a liability. As well as winning over both camps - regionalists and nationalists - to the demand of self-government, it might as well lead Plaid to lose both.

The whole issue of self-government has in the past few years become very closely linked to the process of European integration. The evolution of the Community after the Single Act and the Maastricht Treaty has made it of vital importance to the coherence of Plaid's programme. Only the European level of governance has allowed the demand for a Welsh parliament and government (without statehood) to be practically conceivable. There are few instances in which parliament or government is demanded without Plaid making a reference to this being in the context of "Europe". The European Union having become so central to the programme and discourse of Plaid, it will be necessary, subsequently, to look at this European dimension in a little more detail.

The European Dimension

There is a growing body of literature on the role of regions in the European Union. Recently this has diversified into different strands, looking in turn at the regional aspects of the economic impact of the Single Market, the ongoing institutional reform of the Union and the growing network of pressure group politics in Brussels. The deficiencies of some of the writings in this field which generalize moves towards a greater regionalisation of the Community into the emergence of a 'Europe of the Regions' has been discussed elsewhere (Borras-Alomar, Christiansen and Rodriguez-Pose, 1994; Christiansen, 1992). The underlying fact remains, nevertheless, that "Europe", multifaceted and complex as it is, holds an enormous *potential* for regional actors.

This is especially true for Plaid, which has, since joining the European Free Alliance in 1982, committed itself wholly to the European cause. In the run-up to the 4th direct election to the European Parliament the way in which the European Union has become the foundation of the party's quest for self-government is especially obvious. Plaid's stand on Europe is first and foremost a positive one - the party is enthusiatically supportive of the idea of European integration and of Welsh participation in this project. Criticism revolves solely around the way in which Wales is seen to be underrepresented and misrepresented, having no "independent voice" of its own.

The fact that Plaid's affirmative European position dates back to the early 1980s is perhaps significant in that "Europe" was at that time much more controversial than it is now. While policies and reform of the European Community continues to be one of the most divisive issues for the larger parties, the basic fact that Britain is an EU Member State with concomitant duties and obligations is generally accepted, in any case more so than ten years ago.

Parties which are unequivocally pro-European are still a small minority in Westminster. Yet, as with bilingulism and self-government, European

integration has become a further central demand of Plaid which has become, if moderately so, part of mainstream Welsh politics. The Labour Party have changed their policy progressively (Labour Party in Wales, 1994), and even though the parliamentary party has shown divisions over the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, the affirmative outlook towards Europe is now dominant after the resignation of Neil Kinnock.

In Wales the 1975 referendum on the Common Market did not produce results that were significantly divergent from the UK average. Rural Wales has supported a Community that stood, up to now, for subsidising the region's argricultural production. Industrial Wales has benefitted from the Community's reformed regional policy which has allocated £75m for the reconversion of the coalfields in the valleys. The urban belt of South Wales which has attracted an extraordinary share of inward investment has done so also on the basis of foreign investment into the Community before and after the Single Act. The Welsh Development Agency has been pro-active, linking up with regions in other Member States, establishing a "Wales Euro Centre" in Brussels and organizing the 1992 Europartenariat, an EC-wide trade fair to generate joint ventures among small-and-medium-sized enterprises. Thus, the impact of EC policies on the local and regional level in Wales is particularly strong, going beyond the general phenomenon of what has been called the "Europeanisation of subcentral government" (Rhodes, 1993).

European integration has therefore had a number of tangible results which have increased support for membership in the region. Plaid, having been supportive early on, are now trying to capitalise on their European credentials by emphasising the way in which Welsh interests would be better served if it had "direct access". As with self-government, the language used in this respect is highly ambiguous. The fact, useful for Plaid's argumentation, is that "direct access" and "independent voice" *vis-à-vis* the Commission and the Parliament is afforded by both regions and Member States. Such demands can therefore

imply both the wish for becoming a 13th Member State, as is SNP policy, or the wish for the creation of regional institutions which might lobby the Community more effectively.

The ambiguity - and tension - in this policy is emphasised if one looks closely at the way in which demands are framed by Plaid: on the one hand, reference is made to "small nations" like Ireland or Denmark, on the other hand Wales is compared to "strong regions" like Bavaria and Catalonia. It is true, of course, that since each of these possess unitary structures which facilitate the formulation of demands, that they have better representation within the Community and thus reap greater benefits from membership. Similarly, Plaid's vision of "Europe" is that of the 'Europe of the Regions' - the main demand on the reform of the Community is the development of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) into a strong second chamber of the Parliament with full decision-making powers. It would be in this "chamber of regions and nations" that Wales would be directly represented and able to influence Union policies, *not* in the Council of Ministers on which the SNP concentrates its demands for direct Scottish access.

The structure of these demands is further complicated by the fact that the Welsh Secretary of State is criticised for complete absence from the Council of Ministers where at least the Scottish Secretary has occasionally been present. Unlike the Scottish counterpart, the Welsh Office has also, until recently, not been represented among the staff of the United Kingdom Permanent Representation to the Union, which is seen as further evidence that Welsh interests are not properly taken care of. As a result, it is not at all clear whether the Welsh Office does represent the Welsh interest, simply not well enough, or whether an elected body would be the only way to bring Wales into line with the rest of Europe.

In this dilemma of having to demand more of the same (Welsh Office activity in Brussels), while also demanding something entirely different (self-

government for Wales in Europe), Plaid has not been helped by the pro-European credentials of David Hunt who had presided over the Welsh Office during the important years of the Maastricht debate. He had been very pro-active on Europe, causing friction both with the Thatcherite faction in Westminster and within his own administration.

Plaid has responded to this dilemma by emphasising the potential of European integration, applauding the achievements of Welsh Office, WDA and Labour MEPs in getting European finance into the regions, but demonstrating with examples from abroad that a "self-governed Wales in Europe" would do significantly better than that.

European integration is of course constructed as part of the general attack on the British state, and the party literature consciously creates an image of solidarity between regional actors and Community institutions. Partially this is true, of course, especially since the Commission had in the 1970s felt the need to open an office in Cardiff, an exception to the rule that only Member State capitals have Commission representations. Direct links between local government and the Commission have been aided, and the fact that the South Wales MEP Wayne David has been the vice chair of the EP's Regional Policy Committee is seen as having increased the attention Welsh interests receive among the Community institutions.

Plaid, as member of EFA and hence linked to the EP's Rainbow Group, has built on this to increase its own European involvement, not without success. The 1993 EFA congress was held in Cardiff, and the party was looking towards support from this transnational alliance in the run-up to the European Elections in June 1994. Recently, however, EFA has been strained by their Italian members Lega Nord entering into a coalition government with a neo-fascist party, which was seen by some as a liability to EFA's credentials as being decentralist and left-libertarian. During a heated meeting in Milan in March 1994, Plaid decided to leave the Alliance, while Lega Nord was forced to

suspend their membership. Yet, this withdrawal only emphasises the way in which the European party political connection is seen to be critical to Plaid's credibility.

With regard to European policy-making, leading Plaid officials have lobbied the Commission on specific issues. One such project is the successful attempt of having North West Wales recognized as a border region to make EU funding available under the Interreg 2 initiative. The relevent constituency is a Plaid seat and the Plaid MP Ieuan Jones lead the lobbying effort that was supported by other actors: local government (dominated by nationalists and independents), Welsh Office (tied by a Government promise to support the bid which was part of the "deal" to gain Plaid Cymru support for the Masstricht debates in parliament) and private interests. The fact that North West Wales has been the only British region to bid successfully for Interreg II funding is perhaps a sign that such lobbying is important and that Plaid strength in the area has made a change to this policy outcome. The fact that under Interreg the Commission has the final say on the selection of eligible regions is important to understand the configuration of interests and capabilities of the actors involved.

The success of the Interreg II bid for North Wales is in fact one of the few cases in which also Plaid's votes in Westminster were significant. The government, short of a majority due to its own anti-Maastricht 'rebels', needed to accommodate opposition demands in order to be able to pass the Treaty successfully through the chamber. In the face of a Labour amendment to the Maastricht Bill calling for CoR members to be directly elected local councillors, the Conservative leadership offered the nationalist parties guaranteed representation on the CoR, the creation of a new "All-Wales Forum" (made up of Welsh MPs, MEPs and local councillors) and government support for the Interreg proposal. As Plaid (in contrast to the SNP) did vote with the government on the relevant occasions, these guarantees are now being implemented: Interreg II for North Wales did in fact go through - being the only

one of eight UK proposals to be accepted by the Commission, Plaid does have a represntative among the the Welsh members on the CoR, and the first meeting of the All Wales Forum is anticipated for the second half of the year (after the EP elections in June).

In cases like these the image of the Community-region alliance is very pervasive, yet it is important to remember the Commission can only - and wants only to - go so far, since it has also to balance the Member States' interest and observe a degree of neutrality regarding domestic arrangements. The diffused nature of Welsh interest-representation - local government associations like the Assembly of Welsh Counties and the Standing Conference on South Wales, the four Labour MEPs, the Conservative-governed Welsh Office, quangos like the WDA with the Wales Euro Centre, direct lobbying by Plaid - is useful only to degree, for there are, unsurprisingly, inconsistencies and contradictions in the requests put forwards. From this point of view a single Welsh parliament and government would of course improve communications and influence.

Notwithstanding the fact that ambiguity surrounds the exact kind of Union the party envisages - a 'Europe of the Regions' or a 'Europe of nation-states' - the commitment to Europe and the rationale for this commitment from a regionalist point out view are clear. Considering what has been said above about the (un)likelihood of achieving independence for Wales against the background of a diffused national identity, settling for "full status" within the European Union is certainly pragmatic. At the same time, the vision of gradual development towards fundamental change remains, just that Plaid's European vision puts the emphasis of this on changes in Brussels, on the future constitution of the European Union rather than on the precise nature of Welsh self-government.

Such acknowledgement of the essential interdependence of regions and states within Europe, of the future being dominated by membership of the EU rather than independence from the UK, is forward-looking and, one could even say,

enlightened in the view of other nationalist movements. Despite the essential ambiguity at the heart of the party's European vision, it is, one could argue, a more honest and realistic vision than the SNP's slogan of "Independence in Europe", something which could be called a contradiction in terms.

Yet Plaid does not stop at the mere acknowledgment of the European dimension to regionalist politics, but even sees an active role for the Union in the governance of Wales. In the *Government for Wales Motion*, which was passed with great majority at the 1993 annual conference, it sees the European Commission as an interim government on the way to an undefined end-state of Welsh self-government, envisaging a transitionary period under European rule comparable to the Saarland before 1955. This being a strong - some might argue: blind - commitment to European administration, it is nevertheless as utopian as the straightforward call for independence one hears elsewhere. Surely the Union has helped regional governments to formulate their demands more successfully, and regionalist movements have found developments which have aided their case for self-government, but these have always been indirect and timid developments. Any politisation of Commission influence on regional matters has been avoided, and Member States have been alert to any overt role the Commission might play in their territorial politics. As a result, the Commission and the Union at large have been exceptionally absent from ethnic politics within the Member States - the Northern Irish and Basque case testify to this pattern. It is inconceivable from this past experience that the Union would open up the possibility for the Commission to administer regions within the Union's territory, leaving aside the question as to how far the Commission, a largely regulatory body, is actually capable of territorial adminstration.

One has to conclude that Plaid has managed well to link up its policy on self-government with the increasingly European dimension of regional government, but that, again, this has been achieved through considerable ambiguity. In this case the ambiguity appears to result from a lack of consensus

within the party as to what vision of Europe should be supported and/or expected. The result, as for the general programme, is a double-edged sword, for it might as well succeed in papering over differences within the party as it might create a platform that is unacceptable to the majority. The party's hope is obviously that the strong commitment to Europe as such is different enough from the other parties' programmes that the electorate will not question the underlying tension contained in the Plaid Cymru manifesto.

Evolution of Organization Structure and Electoral Performance in 1990s

The party has hailed the outcome of the 1992 general election as a success, claiming that it "has been greatly strengthened by its strong performance" (*Plaid Cymru Newsletter*, June 1992). Whatever the extent of this strengthening, it is true that the percentage share of the vote had increased for the first time since 1974 and a record number of 4 MPs were returned to Westminster (Table 5). Thus a long-term erosion of the vote had apparently been halted. In the following year Plaid jumped from 4th to 2nd place in the County Council elections, overtaking the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. Expectations for the June 1994 Euro-elections - elections in which the party has always polled above average and in which its vote increased to almost 13 per cent in 1989 (Tables 3 and 7) - are naturally high.

Yet some cautionary notes are in order. In the three seats of the 1989 European election which lie outside its heartland in North West Wales, Plaid came 4th (Table 4) - not, as might have been expected, to the Liberals but to the Green Party that had, with 15 per cent across the UK, a spectacular success on that occasion (Table 2). To be overtaken in such manner, with double the vote, by a party which was new to British politics, certainly caused some anxiety among the party leadership. Despite the high vote, there were thus disputes in the party about the correct response to the Green challenge. As remarked above, Plaid had been, through most of its history, environmentalist, pacifist, anti-industrialist and progressively left-wing, and it is clear that Plaid and the Greens competed for the same clientele. Under the British electoral system there clearly is no place for two parties of such similar outlook, and the response has been to forge Plaid/Green alliances on a constituency basis in the run-up to the 1992 general election. This policy was controversial, and the National Executive did neither endorse nor prohibit this practice. One of these alliances did in fact turn out to be the location of the additional seat the Plaid gained in that election from the Liberal Democrats: Ceredigion and Pembroke

North. As it was won with a relatively narrow majority of 3,200, having avoided to split the environmental vote might indeed have made the crucial difference in winning this seat and contributing to the general success.

A second concern to the current position of Plaid stems from its very 'success', a success which as has been argued above owed more to external factors and indeed to structural transformations than to the parliamentary path that Plaid had chosen. Plaid has up to now capitalized on being the moderate, pragmatic wing of a nationalist movement which also included militant and even violent factions. There was thus the electoral threat to the established parties in the form of Plaid, combined with the more or less constant presence of 'voice' emanating mainly in the form of civil disobedience protests by the Welsh Language Society, but also from the holiday homes arson campaign of "The Sons of Glendower", even bombs from the "Wales Free Army" (Davies, 1993; Geary, 1994). As a result, while the share of Plaid's vote has actually declined since the mid-1970s, changing governments have felt a need to fulfil some of their more moderate demands as a way of mollifying nationalism (Sharpe, 1985; Teghtsoonian, 1987). The point is not that London governments might fear an increase in violence, but that the presence of a nationalist party with parliamentary presentation might benefit significantly from an uncompromising stance towards such protests. This, at least, was the lesson that could be drawn from the surge in nationalist support in the mid-1970s. A threat has set into motion what has been called "unobtrusive devolution" (Sharpe, 1985), by which is meant the way in which cultural and symbolic demands have been accommodated by governments opposed to political devolution.

Plaid has thus capitalized on its *potential* - and, it has to be said, on that of the SNP in Scotland - of making inroads into the share of the established party vote in Wales. The culmination of this blackmail function would of course be the establishment of a Welsh Senate as it is now contained in the programmes of Labour, the Liberal Democrats and Plaid. In this scenario, which on the basis

of current polls and perceptions is not unlikely to occur after the next election, the blackmail potential of moderate nationalism might soon be exhausted. All its demands would have been realized, though by different actors and without movement ever winning a majority of the vote in the region. As soon as there are not many more region-specific, cultural or economic demands that a Welsh national party can make, since they have all been fulfilled, it might not have much of a future.

As noted above, Plaid's policy stance on two major issues - self-government and bilingualism - has received moderate support from Labour and Liberal Party. We will return to the issue of self-government in the following section dealing with the impact of European integration on Welsh politics. But the electoral geography of the language issue alone is already difficult to disentangle. Despite the increasing usage of Welsh language in the urban parts of industrial South Wales, Plaid's share of the vote there has collapsed over the past twenty years (Table 6). It has markedly increased in those areas which are still and perhaps increasingly bilingual, but in the South where Welsh-speakers are a small minority, Plaid has lost votes during this time. This might be due to continuous immigration from England, but, perhaps more likely, there is a general perception that Plaid, together with the respective pressure groups, has achieved its main purpose of reconstituting Wales as a political and cultural unit, and that now other issues, social, economic and environmental are more important than regional nationalism.

These two points together could mean that Plaid might become the victim of its (and the non-parliamentary groups') 'success', and that the future might herald decline. But such considerations are of course hypothetical, especially since there is no comprehensive data on public attitudes in Wales since the Welsh Election Study of 1979. What remains true is that Plaid's support is concentrated in North West Wales where three of its four constituencies are situated. It is this part which has been identified as *Y Fro Gymraeg* - the Welsh-

speaking Wales (Balsom, 1983). Here at least two safe seats have emerged and also in local government territorially concentrated, strong positions are visible.

Yet there are some peculiarities on the local level which make it difficult, without extensive research, to gauge the real power that Plaid wields here. Locally, there are two main centres for Plaid support: Gwynedd County in the North West and the valleys of Mid-Glamorgan and Gwent in the industrial South. In Gwynedd the Plaid share was 13 per cent in 1986, a figure which is above the regional average but which is significantly lower than its general election result in this area (Karran and Bochel, 1986). The reason for this is that local government politics in Wales have a strong tradition of independent candidates and of uncontested elections. This is true especially of the North West. In 1986, 52.4 per cent of the vote in Gwynedd went to independents - the second-highest figure in the whole of the UK. At the same time, the share of contested divisions was with 60 per cent the second-lowest in the UK. In 40 per cent single candidates, and often independents, won their council seats uncontested. It is said that many of these harbour nationalist sentiments, something that would not be surprising considering the share of Welsh speakers and the general election result, but from an academic point of view their exact relationship with Plaid remains unclear.

In the councils of the South, Plaid has made considerable inroads into traditional Labour bastions. It is in the District Councils of the mining valleys - 'Welsh Wales' in Balsom's terminology - that Plaid had its highest percentage shares in 1991: 46.5 per cent Cynon Valley, 37 per cent in Islwyn and 35 per cent in Taff-Ely (Rallings and Thrasher, 1991). In the latter the leader of the council is from Plaid - yet even here the party is not in control, but merely the strongest coalition partner in a hung council.

The picture of concentrated strength in *Y Fro Gymraeg* and in parts of 'Welsh Wales' (see Maps) is not consistent, though: in the North West, as mentioned, because of the strong tradition of independents, in the South because

also here many wards are uncontested and continue to be dominated by Labour. Yet it is clear that Plaid support is localised in certain key areas, and that the party benefits to some extent from the electoral system. (Under proportional representation on a Welsh list, Plaid would probably have one MP less.)

It would be wrong to assume from what has been said above that Plaid is strong in local government in Wales. Yet they are not marginal either. They are represented proportionally on both the Assembly of Welsh Counties and the Association of Welsh District Councils, bodies which are important parts of the network of consultative policy-making in Wales (Madgwick and James, 1980). Local government in Britain is potentially quite weak in a West European perspective, a potentiality which, as discussed above, came to a head during the 1980s. In Wales local government is in a somewhat privileged position compared to local councils in England, since the cooperation with central government is institutionalized in periodic meetings with the Welsh Office. There is, despite the marked political differences between the parties governing the national and the local level, a certain bipartisanship in matters Welsh, at any rate less of a confrontational climate than in England. Empirical research shows that even though the input of local government in Wales is limited to consultation, it does have an influence on the course of governmental policy in the region. (Boyne, 1993)

Perhaps a more important role for Plaid is that of an agenda-setter. Considering that in the recent past both large parties have determined, respectively, Welsh Office and local government policy, Plaid has been able to present itself as the 'real' opposition. In the last couple of years both the British left and the right have been on the defensive, forced to major reviews of their political programmes and policies. In England the Liberal Democrats, presenting themselves as the alternative to spent political forces, have profited from this opportunity, as can be seen from their recent by-election and local election victories. In Wales, on the other hand, Plaid has taken up this role, for the

County Council election success in 1993 was perhaps as much due to the dissatisfaction with the larger parties as to the rising credibility of Plaid's demands.

In setting the agenda on Welsh politics Plaid has been successful quite of proportion to its actual showing at the ballot-box. The reasons for this are varied. Plaid had always stronger than average support among intellectuals - their leadership has generally been drawn from the arts and the academic community. In as much as these areas have grown in importance, these individuals have had a stronger influence on the public discourse. This is even more true of the media, especially the Welsh medium publications and broadcasts. It is clear, for example, that S4C - having been created under such strong pressure from Plaid - should attract some of their followers and in due course produce a programme that is not unfavourable to the party. There has been research on alleged over-representation of Plaid in Welsh television news, together with non-representation in London news programmes, (Hartley and Wright, 1986; Tables 15 and 16) which argues that quantative coverage does not imply positive representation - yet Plaid's agenda-setting role seems to be confirmed by this data.

Plaid is better organised than the other parties in Wales, employing more full-time staff and agents in the constituencies (Balsom and Burch, 1980), and is therefore better able to respond adequately to regional issues compared to the other parties that rely on London know-how and policy-making. Party finances are comparatively sound, since members are by and large dedicated to the Welsh cause and willing to contribute financially. There had been considerable laxity in the collection of membership fees - one report stated that only a third of the members paid their dues - but after 1964, along with other internal changes as part of the modernization programme, the system of collection has been changed and now appears to work satisfactorily (McAllister, 1981).

The organizational modernization that began in the 1960s therefore seems to have contributed to the markedly better results since. The fact that more seats have been won with a smaller share of the overall vote might be an indication for an improved targeting of organizational resources. The programmatic modernization which has been more erratic and is currently in a new phase appears to address important issues that dominate Welsh politics in a credible manner. On these counts the move from a sectarian movement - a 'sect' as it has been called - to a modern party, combining a catch-all programme with single-issue politics, appears to have been successful.

The problem with party modernization has been that it has not brought the electoral results that one might have expected. The Plaid vote has stagnated at around 10 per cent, with the more important, high-turnout elections leaving the party below that. While the party has changed programme, organization and strategy, proving to be comparatively flexible in dealing with the structural constraints, and while governmental responses have to a disproportionate extent been accommodating of nationalist demands, voter alignments have not proven to be so malleable.

Though having redefined "the Welsh" as meaning all residents of the peninsula, whether Welsh-speaking or not, whether born in Wales or not, its appeal to English-speakers and to British-identifiers in the demographic centre in the South remains limited. Its New Politics profile might appeal to the younger voters, but here the competition with the Greens are considerable. In this respect there also remain tensions between the party's younger leadership and the rank-and-file which is often located in the more rural parts and tends to be conservative on the new politics dimension. A certain weariness both among the 'young turks' - who feel bogged down by a party apparatus that has only recently been reformed - and the 'old guard' - who see the traditional nationalist cause taken over by feminism, socialism, environmentalism - means that reconciliation among the generational groups and consolidation of the current

moderate left platform might hinge on visible improvement of the party's electoral fortunes in the next couple of elections.

Considering the mixed picture of 'success', both electorally and attitudinal, it is probably fair to say that the medium-term fortunes of the party hinge essentially on the fate of the 'Parliament for Wales' issue. As the experience of 1979 showed, such a campaign is potentially a double-edged sword, and, should the next general election change the current Westminster majority, a further failure to achieve a Welsh Assembly - a renewed popular dismissal - might spell disillusion and decline for the party. Yet even success, i.e. the creation of a Welsh Parliament, might backfire. Plaid sees such a *Senedd* as the beginning of a transition period, its role in this assembly then being to direct the course of this transition. The Welsh electorate, on the other hand, is likely to see such a Parliament as the final institutional arrangement: the democratisation of a sizable Welsh administration which must then be allowed to come to a rest and do its job.

Conclusion

The main conclusions on the party's policies and politics have been included in the sections above. A general theme has been the way in which Plaid has oscillated around controversial issues and used ambiguity to master the retreat from old positions. The structural background of opportunities and constraints has been discussed, and the way in which these have been used by the political actors. Inability to put aside the language issue and to move to political and economic themes account for the party's existence in the doldrums before and after the war. When the economic nettle was finally grasped, in the early 1980s, it was too late: after 1984 demands for socialism proved to be almost as much of a liability as the language had done before. The party proved to be slow in adapting to the strutural changes in the nature of regional identity on which it depends so crucially. The tension between economic necessities of regional development and the political desire for anti-centralist identity, which theoretical models of regionalism have identified, has clearly been visible here (Hueglin, 1989).

Yet, the growth of institutional Wales and the rising importance of the European dimension for both Welsh politics and the regional economy have enhanced their chances in the last few years. As has been pointed out, these developments "are likely to ensure that territory remains a major element in [British] politics" in the coming years (Keating, 1991). The issue of "democracy" is now high on the regional agenda, and is being put to use, if ambigiously, by Plaid. British constitutional reform and the emerging Euro-polity are now setting the parameters for Plaid's political action and, ultimately, for its electoral success. The final question to be addressed here is the comparative European perspective on the Welsh party.

Plaid, because of its uses of ambiguity, is difficult to classify within the typologies that have been proposed (Müller-Rommel, 1994; Blondel, 1994). There clearly is a new left/new politics dimension to Plaid's programme, the

problem being that some of the positions have always been part of the party's politics while on some of the really new issues, such as women quotas and a regionalized Europe, rank-and-file support is weak and would probably crumble if it came to implementation.

In terms of discourse and programme, the party could not be classified as separatist, its concern being less the move away from the UK or from England, but the move into government in Wales and into the framework of European governance. Yet, at the same time, it must qualify as a party of cultural protectionism, with the language continuing to be the second major issue. The success of cultural protectionism, insofar as this policy has shown positive results, is to make it appear as a modern, forward-looking concern rather than a policy of exclusion. On the basis of the evidence presented here it would appear as if the party could be categorised equally as being "protectionist", "left-libertarian" and "autonomist" (Müller-Rommel, 1994). It is perhaps this ability to qualify for multiple classification within the regionalist party family which best demonstrates the combined result of modernising reform and of discursive ambiguity which has been analysed above.

With respect to the distinction between "'pure' regionalist", "minority" and "cause" parties which has been suggested (Blondel, 1994), Plaid has been identified as an example of the former type. While this is undoubtedly true - the whole of Wales is the party's concern, the interests of all Welsh residents are said to be defended - electoral map and voting analysis suggests that, for the time being, Plaid remains the party of the Welsh-speaking minority. This image, supported by internal and external perceptions of the party's preoccupation with language issues, its association with the Welsh Language Society, its concentrated support and its small overall size mean that, *de facto*, it could still be defined as a "minority party", representing the interests of a communal group rather than those of a territory.

Finally, perhaps as a way of overcoming the pull between these often conflicting territorial and communal demands, the party does appear as the champion of a "cause": the fight for a parliament for Wales. The focus on this fundamental aim has replaced earlier single-minded concentration on the Welsh language. A variety of other issues are being brought onto the agenda, and agenda items of the other parties and groups are addressed, but these are most usually seen as secondary to the overriding goal of self-government in Wales.

Considering the difficulty of classifying Plaid Cymru in such a comparative West European fashion, it is perhaps best to conclude that the Welsh nationalists have made a virtue out of their own internal divisions, the dilemmas posed on devolutionist strategies through the legal structure of the United Kingdom and identity structure of Wales and of the complexity of territorial politics in a multi-layered and highly interdependent Europe. This virtue - a result of choice as much as of situational constraints - is the fact that the Plaid of the 1990s avoids blunt statements of policy or ideology. In part this virtue has been the ability to compromise, to settle for second-best options where they have been possible in order to achieve pragmatic results. But to a great extent this virtue has also been the use of ambiguity - the ability of Plaid to give up key parts of its programme and strategy in order to reform *while appearing to not having given anything up*. As suggested above, this 'virtue' is also a liability, considering that internally and among the electorate this attitude might well be viewed as hesitation and lack of resolve. Yet in the view of Plaid's commitment to shared sovereignty, to decentralisation and to a strong European dimension of regional politics, ambiguity must primarily be counted as an asset. At a time when the established nation-state order in Western Europe is beginning to come apart, ambiguity - the lack of clear answers and ready solutions to complex problems - might come to be regarded as more appropriate and ultimately more honest than the one-dimensional clarity that is usually expected of political parties.

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Annex: Electoral, Political and Socio-Economic Data on Wales and Plaid Cymru

Table 1 United Kingdom
1992 General Election Result for Wales

Party	% Vote	Seats Won
Conservative	28.6	6
Labour	49.5	27
Liberal Democrats	12.4	1
Plaid Cymru	8.9	4

Turnout: 79.7%

Table 2 European Parliament 1989 Election Result for the United Kingdom

Party	Total Votes	% Vote	Candidates	MEPs
Conservative Party	5,331,098	34.7	78	32
Labour Party	6,153,661	40.1	78	45
Green Party	2,292,718	14.9	78	0
Liberal Democrats	944,861	6.2	78	0
Scottish National Party	406,686	2.6	8	1
Plaid Cymru	115,062	0.8	4	0

Turnout: 36.6%

Table 3 European Parliament
1989 Election Result for Wales

Party	% Vote	Seats Won
Conservative	23.5	0
Labour	48.9	4
Liberal Democrats	3.2	0
Plaid Cymru	12.9	0
Green	11.1	0

Turnout: 41.1%

Table 4 European Parliament 1989 Election Results for the Welsh Constituencies

Party	Wales South	Wales South East	Wales North	Wales Mid and West
Labour	54.7%	64.3%	33.1%	46.9%
Conservative	23.2%	14.1%	31.3%	23.9%
Green	13.1%	12.9%	6.3%	13.2%
Plaid Cymru	5.4%	6.6%	25.4%	11.6%
Turnout	38.1%	38.3%	46.8%	41.2%

Table 5 Plaid Cymru National
Electoral Performance since 1945

General Election	Candidates	% Vote	Seats Won
1945	6	1.1	0
1950	7	1.2	0
1951	4	0.7	0
1955	11	3.1	0
1959	20	5.2	0
1964	23	4.8	0
1966	20	4.3	0
1970	36	11.5	0
1974 (Feb)	36	10.7	2
1974 (Oct)	36	10.8	3
1979	36	8.1	2
1983	38	7.8	2
1987	38	7.3	3
1992	38	8.9	4

Table 6 Welsh language statistics of 1971
and Plaid Cymru vote in selected constituencies

Constituency	% Welsh Speaking	% PC Vote in 1970	%PC Vote in 1992
Caernarfon	83.9	33.4	59.0
Merionnydd	73.5	24.3	44.0
Carmarthen	72.2	30.1	31.5
Ceredigion	67.2	19.6	31.3
Ynys Mon	65.7	22.1	37.1
Merthyr Tydfil	11.3	9.6	6.1
Caerphilly	6.7	28.5	9.5
Cardiff West	4.2	10.1	2.6

Table 7 Plaid Cymru
Electoral Performance since 1980

Year	Level	Rank	% Vote	% Turnout
1981	County	3rd	9.4	
1983	UK	4th	7.8	
1984	Europe		12.2	40.0
1985	County	4th	9.1	47.0
1987	UK	4th	7.3	
1989	Europe	3rd	12.9	41.1
1991	District	3rd	10.7	53.4
1992	UK	4th	8.9	79.7
1993	County	2nd		

Table 8 Basis of Partisanship in Wales in 1979 (in per cent)

Cleavage	Conservative	Labour	Liberal	Plaid Cymru
Ethnicity				
British	60	30	46	4
Welsh	40	70	54	96
Class				
Middle	70	34	55	57
Working	30	66	45	43

Table 9 Interrelationship of identity and language in Wales in 1979 (in per cent)

		Do you speak Welsh?		
		Yes	No	Sum
Do you think of yourself as	Welsh	23	34	57
	British, English or other	5	38	43
	Sum	28	72	100

Table 10 Political Behaviour within the Language Identity Groups

	Welsh Identifying Welsh Speaking	Welsh Identifying not Welsh Speaking	British Identifying not Welsh Speaking
Vote at 1979 Election			
Conservative	18	24	47
Labour	54	66	43
Liberal	6	8	9
Plaid Cymru	22	2	2
Position on Devolution at 1979 Referendum			
Yes	47	25	13
No	53	75	87

Table 11 Core-Periphery Comparison of Key Economic and Social Data for the 1980s

	Wales	South East England
% change in employment 1979-86	-16.9	-1.7
% change in manufacturing employment 1979-1986	-35.9	-25.4
unemployment rate February 1988	14.3	7.2
umemployment rate March 1991	8.1	6.0
population change 1981-1988	1.5	2.0
% of all GB employees in		
high tech manufacturing	3.7	41.1
banking and finance	2.8	49.6
research and development	1.7	55.0
% of total 1980 graduates working in the region in 1986	3.7	50.3[a]
net flow of manufacturing establishments 1945-1981	586	-1647
% increase in registered businesses 1979-1983	9.1	14.9
Index of GDP/head (UK=100) in 1989	83.6	120.6
annual GDP change 1984	-0.2	2.8[b]
annual GDP change 1987	6.7	4.4[b]
annual GDP change 1990	1.1	0.7[b]

[a] figure is for "South" (South East and South West regions combined).
[b] figure is UK total.

Table 12 Decline of South Wales Coal Mining

Year	No. of collieries	Manpower
1913	...	232,000
1927	...	271,171
1947	214	114,923
1960	127	83,400
1970	52	38,000
1980	35	25,328
1984	28	17,000
1988	8	5,500
1990	3	1,200

Table 13 Development of the Welsh language according to UK Census data

Year	% Welsh speakers
1871	66.2[a]
1891	50.0
1901	49.9
1911	43.5
1921	37.1
1931	36.8
1951	28.9
1961	26.0
1971	20.9
1981	18.9

[a] figure is an estimate based on a private survey, the offical census including language questions began in 1891.

Table 14 Welsh Public Institutions

Name	Date Established
University of Wales	1893
Welsh Department of the Department of Education	1907
Welsh Health Insurance Commissions	1913
Welsh Board of Health	1919
Welsh Regional Hospital Board	1946
Wales Gas Board	1946
Welsh National Opera	1946
Welsh Youth Orchestra	1946
Welsh Joint Education Committee	1948
Council for Wales	1948
Ministry for Welsh Affairs	1951
BBC Wales Radio	1953
Welsh Academy	1956
Welsh Office	1964
BBC Wales Television	1964
Development Board for Rural Wales	1965
Welsh Arts Council	1967
Wales Tourist Board	1968
Sports Council for Wales	1969
Commission for Local Government Administration in Wales	1972
Welsh Water Authority	
Welsh Development Agency	1975
Land Authority Wales	1975
Welsh Consumer Council	1975
House of Commons Select Committee on Welsh Affairs	1979
Welsh Language Education Development Committee	1986
Welsh Language Board	1988

Table 15 Coverage of Political Parties in Welsh television news programmes 22 Feb - 26 Mar 1982

Party	Mentions	% of total	% of vote at 1979 election
Labour	63	30.0	46.9
Conservative	73	34.8	32.2
Liberal	12	5.7	10.6
SDP	13	6.2	n/a
Alliance	10	4.8	n/a
Plaid Cymru	39	18.6	8.1

Table 16 Coverage of Political Parties in London television news programmes 22 Feb - 26 Mar 1982

Party	Mentions on *News at Ten*	Mentions on *Nine O'Clock News*	Total
Labour	35	28	63
Conservative	31	23	54
Liberal/Alliance	25	18	43
SNP	7	3	10
Plaid Cymru	0	0	0

Table 17 Identity Survey Findings in Wales (in per cent)

Identity	1968	1979	1981
Welsh	69	57	69
British	15	34	20
English	13	8	10
Other	3	1	2

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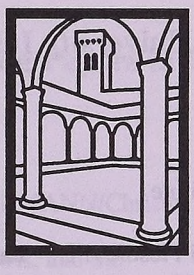

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